

## **Bridging the Gap for Iowans with Mental Health Issues**

## **2017 Proposed Iowa Legislative Priorities**

11-14-16

1. Adequate County funding and the long term funding formula

The original frozen dollar levy was set in 1996. Legislation converted frozen levy to measurement of \$47.28 per capita. For counties below \$47.28 per capita, we request authority for counties to raise the property tax levy to \$47.28. Metro counties affected the most because of population growth over the last 20 years.

- 2. <u>Adequate mental health workforce</u> we have a crisis in nearly every mental health profession.
  - a. Designate the State Dept. of Public Health for the following responsibilities:
    - 1. Establish a robust mental health loan forgiveness program
    - 2. In charge of the building of the mental health workforce
    - 3. <u>State Credentialing Center</u> to solve problem of provider expense and time having to file credentials with each insurance company they do business with.
    - 4. Via the state credentialing center enforce <u>provider network rules</u> to govern the maintenance of insurance provider networks
    - 5. Report annually to the state legislature of lowa's progress in <u>parity access</u> to mental health providers.
- 3. **Children's mental health system** early intervention is essential
  - a. Fund and implement the recommendations from the legislative Children's MH and Well-being workgroup (as per the December 2016 report)
  - b. Fund and require the Children's MH and Well-being workgroup to establish a framework and timeline by 12-15-17 for the creation of a complete children's mental health system i.e., one that at minimum includes statewide access to all of the services and supports on the NAMI "Child and Youth Mental Health Services and Supports" array.
- 4. <u>Multiple levels of care outside of the criminal justice system and jails</u> too many people have no appropriate level of care to enter leaving them susceptible to homelessness and involvement with the criminal justice system and/or stranded in hospitals.
  - The Jackie Waiver to allow "hard to treat" individuals long term care in subacute facilities
  - The Jackie Skip when ill individuals do not follow court ordered treatment, they are required to be taken to an appropriate medical facility, not jail.

Rep. Mary Ann Hanusa (R) – (Jackie's State Rep) has staff working on proposed legislation

 Revise the mental health bed tracking system to ensure timely and accurate data collection and real time availability. At present the average number of vacant beds per day is 80. 80/731 beds available

- equals 10% which means we are at 90% capacity. In the medical world, 80% full means you should start looking at expanding. 85% full means you are in crisis and expansion should start as soon as possible. Iowa is at 90% capacity a true <u>crisis in lack of acute care beds.</u>
- Reduce recidivism in our jails and prisons by providing appropriate treatment and re-entry training
  for inmates with serious mental illness and prevent incarceration of persons with serious mental
  illness charge with low level offenses. Strategies include:
  - Provide additional funding for Dept. of Corrections staffing for the Mental Health Unit,
     Fresh Start Women's Center, Ft. Des Moines and high-risk officers.
  - Provide full funding to train corrections and jail staff on mental health issues and trauma-informed care to include Mental Health First Aid and Crisis Intervention Training (CIT).
  - Expand CIT training for law enforcement officers to include all peace and reserve officers as well as all jail staff.
  - Require expanded mental health training for all first responders to include Mental Health First Aid and CIT, with an adequate and sustainable source of funding.
  - Encourage county sheriffs to provide appropriate psychiatric medication to jail inmates during incarceration and upon release.
- 5. <u>Mental Health Caucus</u> increase the knowledge and understanding of mental health issues among legislators by forming bi-partisan Mental Health Caucuses in each chamber.
- 6. <u>"Step Therapy" Placeholder</u> increase patient protection under lowa law by prohibiting health insurers from the unreasonable use of utilization review techniques such as prior authorizations and step therapy requirements. Patients whose conditions are well managed on a given therapy must be protected throughout their tenure in a particular health plan and must have easily accessible and understandable avenues for appealing decisions.
- 7. Revise Chapter 229 to allow direct hospitalization for involuntary commitment based on a peace officer's affidavit.

The two legislative priorities in royal blue lettering have backing from a coalition of entities. Over 75 are in the \$47.28 coalition. A similar number for step therapy.

## **Iowa Office of Consumer Affairs**

- 1. Prohibit employers from requiring job seekers to check a box on an application if they have any criminal record. Too often this can function as an automatic "application denied" for individuals with any brush with the law. This disproportionately affects persons with serious mental illness because jails and prisons have become the mental health providers of last resort. Co-occurring substance abuse often leads to behaviors that lead to arrest for low-level offenses, making it much more difficult to later become employed. Businesses have a powerful role to play in giving people with criminal records a second chance. The first step in doing this is to "Ban the Box."
- 2. Increase the knowledge and understanding of mental health issues among legislators by forming bi-partisan **Mental Health Caucuses** in each chamber.

## Federal Legislative Priorities

- 1. <u>Pass Federal Mental Health Reform</u> SF 2646 has passed the House. Now waiting for Senate vote and on to President Obama's desk.
- 2. <u>Raise Medicaid and Medicare rates</u> Iowa is 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Poor reimbursement continues to undermine recruitment and retention efforts.